

January 16, 2007

Dear Task Force Members:

We have finished our process of identifying major problems and gaps relating to the education of school age children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Areva and I wish to express our gratitude to all of you for your hard work and time, recognizing that this is not an easy process. Your participation is crucial to the Commission's success. We are now down to our final task, identifying solutions, strategies and opportunities for closing the priority gaps identified at our last meeting.

Attached is a paper summarizing the issues from our first two meetings, as well as the summary of major priority problems as voted upon at the at the December meeting ("Summary of Major Problems and Gaps"). We will use this paper as a guide, and focus on each of the five identified problems and gaps with the goal of developing a set of priority solutions by the end of the meeting. As a whole group, we will discuss each of the items until we reach consensus on solutions for each of the five areas.

Given all we must accomplish in just one, final meeting, it is critical that each of you pick an item or two from the "Summary of Major Problems and Gaps" paper that address your interests, knowledge and experiences in working with students with ASD and their families. Please come prepared with strategies and opportunities for your vision for solving your selected problem(s)/gap(s). Our task force members share a wealth of talent and expertise, as well as diverse strengths. We encourage you to work together with others on the task force where you have common interests. Please refer to your previously sent list of task force members; if necessary, Harriet Levy will be happy to provide you with any contact information you may need.

The following are some suggested guidelines to help focus your thinking. These reflect the types of questions that would likely be raised during state discussions about policy and fiscal proposals:

- The state has a clear role and responsibility to address the issue, including legal mandates.
- The potential solution is clearly identified and feasible to implement.
- The potential solution is cost effective; it is the right thing to do at the right time.
- It will be possible to know whether the solution works. There is a way to measure success or failure.
- The solution has the potential for systemic change that would benefit a larger population of children than only children with autism spectrum disorder.
- There may be successful models to learn from, as well as opportunities for leveraging and/or collaborating with other entities.
- What data/information describes the problem/gap?

Any supporting data and information can either be sent to staff prior to the meeting, or brought with you to the meeting and given to staff. You may also send additional information to staff after the meeting as necessary. Because our time is so precious, we recommend having staff fold in the information in the final report to the Commission and not focus on the numbers at this meeting.

If you are unable to attend the meeting and have material that you would like presented, you may send it to our staff, Harriet Levy at harriet.levy@sen.ca.gov

At the next full Commission meeting, each of the task force Chairs and Vice Chairs will present their findings. The Commission will prioritize all of the recommendations from the three task forces. It will then hold public hearings before making its final recommendations in a report to the Governor and Legislature, which is due September 2007. All of you will be kept informed as the Commission refines the task forces' recommendations during this process.

The final Task Force on Education and Professional Development will be on February 5, 2007, at the UC Center Sacramento, 1130 K St. Suite Lower Level 3. The meeting will run from 10 AM to 3 PM. Please RSVP to Harriet Levy at the above address regarding your attendance at the meeting.

We are looking forward to seeing you. All of you have enriched our task force through your participation. We are excited about completing our work and contributing to the critically needed actions that stand to address solutions to critical problems now being experienced by those with autism spectrum disorders and their families. Together, we can craft quality recommendations to the Commission.

Sincerely,

Rudy Castruita, Chair

Areva Martin, Vice Chair

Attachments: Summary of Major Problems and Gaps
Driving directions
Travel Expense Forms